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121 But I have used illustrative material from other villages where it was more complete or less confusing. In Appendices, I set out genealogies, hut censuses, and plans, of the two villages. In the text I use reference numbers in these genealogies, by generation and position in generations, to identify people.

It is necessary to select illustrations because the structural uniformities I wish to describe are often hidden by the idiosyncrasies of particular examples. The general principles of social structure, as I present them here, have been abstracted from my observations over a period of two years, not only in Cikoja and Ali Kasumka villages, but in many others in the Machinga area. I present my illustrations not with any belief that they prove my analysis, but only to help the reader set the principles I describe in the reality of Yao life.

The Field Work

123 I spent the first two weeks of my stay in Nyasaland talking over my proposed field work with the Administrative officers of the Nyasaland Government. The Provincial Commissioner suggested that I should do a round trip of the Yao area with the District Commissioner at Zomba. After this tour, in consultation with Chief Kawinga and the District Commissioner, I decided that the best place for me to start would be in Chief Chiwalo's area. The District Commissioner then took me to Chiwalo who indicated a site in his court-village where I could pitch my tent.

124 For the first week I held meetings with the chief and some of the older men of the vicinity and spent most of my time making notes on material culture, 'customs' and history. On the first page of my notes I find that there is a good description of Yao beliefs in sorcery, all described as if it were in the past: a full year was to pass before my informants were prepared to admit that these beliefs were still held. After a week or two of this 123 general activity I decided to try my first village census. The 125 results were hardly encouraging. Often when villagers knew 203 I was coming they slipped away into the bush. Those who were left frequently refused steadfastly to answer my questions. Many rumours arose to explain my presence. I heard, for example, that I had been sent by the Government to record the names of those to be taken away as soldiers for the next

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war. I heard that I was an American spy, and also that I was a spy for the Portuguese, because Nyasaland, or at least the Yao area of it, was going to become part of Mozambique. I spent much of my enforced idleness during these early months copying down texts in Yao from my clerk and translating them into English.

Towards the end of 1946, when the rains had set in, I decided to move into a vacant house on a tobacco market about five miles from where I had first pitched my tent. I then started to make a census of the nearest village. Here the attitude of the people was markedly different and I established friendly and happy relationships with them. For some weeks I systematically made censuses of the surrounding villages, and got my first insight into the structural principles of Yao villages. I left this area to attend a conference of research officers of the Institute, and when I returned I pitched my tent in the village into which my personal servant had married. By this time I was speaking some of the language and had started to talk to people directly. I now began to establish a set of informants who would come to my tent in the afternoons and dictate texts to me in Yao on various topics of interest, which I immediately translated into English. The mornings I spent out in neighbouring villages. It was during this period that I gradually heard about the various ceremonies that were being performed and was able to attend them. My wife too was able to attend some of the women's ceremonies. Some months later I moved down to Kawinga's area and pitched my tent in one of the largest and most complex villages I could find and made a complete census of it. I chose this village so that it would be sufficiently close for me to attend Kawinga's court, which was the largest in the area. I left the field in September 1947, and in September 1948 returned to Chiwale's village. I now engaged a new clerk who could speak no English and who came from the village in Chiwale's area where I had originally settled. During my second trip I visited Jalasi, Kanuli and Kalembo chiefdoms, all in different parts of the Yao country, and made village censuses in each.

The procedure I adopted in making village censuses was as follows. Usually I visited the headman a day or so in advance to explain my intention to him. Most of the villages I studied were fairly close to that in which I was camped so that the people

?: Hetherwick M-S (ca. 1900) 1902 ??? Yao ???

SOME ANIMISTIC BELIEFS AMONG THE YAOS OF BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA.

By the Rev. Alexander Hetherwick, M.A., F.R.G.S., of the Blantyre Mission, British Central Africa.

The original home of the Yao tribe may be roughly described as the large and hilly plateau which lies to the east of Lake Nyasa, and is bounded by the Rivers Rovuma and Lujende. Forty years ago, about the time that Livingstone first entered the country, they began to be pressed on the north by the Magwangwara, and on the east by the Makwaa tribes. These invasions caused them to move, some westward down to the shores of Lake Nyasa or the banks of the Upper Shire River, and others southward to the Shire Highlands, Mount Zomba and the eastern slopes of Mount Mlanje. In every case they succeeded in either subjugating or expelling the original Manori or Mang'anja inhabitants of those districts, and in no case have they lost their own independence.

Till about fifty or sixty years ago the Yaos were untouched by any external influences, and when at that time the Arab and coast trader from Kilwa and Zanzibar began to trust and trade with them they appear to have been little affected by contact with these visitors. Only a few of the younger men aped at following Mohammedan usages, and these only grafted on to their still cherished belief in the old faiths of their fathers. The Koran, or a few of its texts, was added to the many other charms they had already long about their necks. The faith which the first missionaries found them in possession of when they entered the country twenty-five years ago may therefore be held to be the unadulterated creed of the tribe from time immemorial.

The foundation of the Yao religion is to be found in the *dimba*, the soul, *shadow* or *spirit which every human being possesses*, and which in the beginning *ngwiri* is his life. They profess to give no definite description of the nature or characteristics of this soul. In their minds however it is allied with the shadow, and would seem to bear to the body the relation which a picture has to the reality. Their word for a shadow is *chiwilili*, which is also the term that they use to denote a picture, and pictures they associate with the shadow or shadows of the dead. I have known natives refuse to enter a room where pictures were hung on the walls "because of the *mandu*, souls, which were in them." The photographic camera was at first an object of dread, and when it was turned upon a group of natives they dispersed in all directions with shrieks of terror. "The Europeans,"

they said, "we about to take away their shadows and they would die." In their mind the finder was allied to the shadow or picture, and the removal of it to the photographic plate would cause the disease or death of the shadow body.

As an instance of their faith in the close relationship of the finder and the picture or shadow, I may relate the following incident. An influential Tao chief on Mount Zombo with whom I was on terms of intimate friendship for years, refused to allow himself to be photographed, fearing the consequences on his life. At last I was able to persuade him to give me a sitting, but on the sole condition that the picture was to be shown to none of his subjects but to be sent out of the country as soon as possible. He feared lest some ill-wisher might use it as a means towards his bewitchment. Some months afterwards the chief became seriously ill, and in the minds of his attendants his illness was attributed to some accident having befallen the photographic plate on which they believed the picture of their chief to be imprinted. If that negative had been broken in England, whither it had been sent, their chief's illness would be accounted for. Accordingly they appealed to the divining oracle, who, however, after consulting the "bele," assured them that the picture was intact, and that its consequences the disease must be ascribed to some other cause.

The finder or soul is recognised as the chief agency in disease. To dream is, in the Tao tongue, *kangawela wamba*, where wamba is the plural form of finder. The finder is supposed to go out and visit the scenes and persons in dreams shown, and in turn is visited by the wamba of others, dead or living. Pains in the body on rising from sleep in the morning are usually attributed to such nocturnal visits, while diseases or pains of a severer type are ascribed to mitigations by the whips of the wamba or more frequently of the witches who prowl around during the night watches.

Madness, idiocy and the ravings of delirium or disease are accounted for by a similar agency. The sufferers are the wamba, prey of the spirits, and a sudden fit of epilepsy or insanity is described as *pakawela wamba*, the spirits have seized him. Such persons are usually regarded with awe, as living in close contact with the unseen, but no incantations or enchantments are ever used to expel the spirit in possession. Some native doctors are credited with a knowledge of certain medicines which they say are effectual in such cases, but their application in no way differs from those employed in treating ordinary types of disease. Idiots and *the insane are allowed to wander at will* about the village, and only when violent symptoms show themselves as a danger to the community is any physical restraint put upon them.

The wamba are also employed as the inspiring agencies in the ravings of the witch detective. This person, usually a woman, is called in to discover who is the guilty agent in cases of mysterious deaths or outbreak of an epidemic at a village. She arrives on the scene and takes up her abode for a few days previous to her actual denunciation. She mixes with the people, learns all the scandal and gossip of the community, and at night prowls about the houses searching for